

# Funeral Bible Talk on John 14:1-14

## (for the death of a Christian)

Bill, as we all know, was unwell for some years. Louise, you have done a terrific job in looking after Bill. People have held you and Bill in the highest esteem for the way in which you have conducted your life. And the way you have conducted yourselves in these last years has reinforced that high esteem. PAUSE

Bill's passing does draw us in a number of ways to the words of Jesus we heard read a few moments ago. Jesus' disciples were worried because Jesus told them he was leaving them and going to a place they couldn't go to straight away. Bill's passing from this earthly life gives us an insight into how Jesus' disciples must have felt. When someone you love and have come to rely upon leaves – it's a big thing.

So it was a big thing for the disciples when Jesus said to them, ***“Where I am going you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.”***

Peter spoke for all the disciples and asked, ***“Lord, why can't we?”***

Jesus' answer to that question is a big help to us as we come terms with the passing from this life of a man who trusted in God – Bill Smith. Jesus' words are a big help us we wonder if there is a heaven or not. As we wonder if there is really God in heaven. As we ponder how best to use our time and energies here and now.

The Lord Jesus says explicitly to his disciples: Don't worry! Trust me! I'll be in heaven with God the Father. I'll be getting a place ready for you. And I'm going to come back and take you there.

Jesus said to his disciples, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

The Lord Jesus says explicitly to his disciples: Don't worry! Trust me! I'll be in heaven with God the Father. I'll be getting a place ready for you. And I'm going to come back to take you there. PAUSE

How can such a thing be true?

Jesus assures us that what he says about heaven is true because he's the way to get there.

Jesus said, “You know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.”

Thomas had not caught on to Jesus' meaning. He didn't realise that Jesus was talking about heaven. So he says to Jesus, “Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

Jesus' famous words “I am the way and the truth and the life” were spoken in answer to Thomas' question: ‘Lord...we don't understand what you're talking about. Where is the place you're going to? Since we don't know where you're going – how can we possibly know how to get there?’

The answer to Thomas' question comes in the words Jesus' said straight after those famous words: “I am the way and the truth and the life.” Jesus then said: “No-one comes to the Father except through me.”

Heaven is where God the Father is. To be with God the Father is to be in heaven. And Jesus says that he's the way to the Father. PAUSE

Our great comfort as we contemplate Bill's death is that he is with God the Father now. Heaven is where God the Father is.

But we then ask: Who is God the Father? What's he like? Can he be trusted? How can I possibly know what he's like?

That's the question another of Jesus' disciples asks for us.

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us."

In a way, it's a fair question that Philip asks isn't it? Jesus has just said heaven is where God the Father is. He has just said that he's the way to get there. But none of us have been there. So it's as if Philip is saying to Jesus, 'Show us the destination Lord. Give us a look at heaven. Show us the Father.'

But in answer Philip gets a rebuke from Jesus. The question is fair enough. But Jesus reckons Philip should already know the answer. Philip is like a year 12 student asking a year 6 question!

Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work."

Philip had been there when the woman from Samaria said of Jesus, "Come and see a man who told me everything I did." Philip was there when Jesus fed the 5,000. He was there when he saved the woman who had sinned from being stoned by the Pharisees. He was there when Jesus told dead Lazarus to come out of the tomb and he did —alive! Philip was there when Jesus took on the lowliest role of servant and washed Philip's feet — along with the other disciples' feet.

Jesus' words and actions answer those questions: Who is God the Father? What's he like? Can he be trusted? How can I possibly know what he's like?

Heaven is where God the Father is. You want to know what heaven's like? Jesus perfectly shows God the Father to us in his words and actions. He is the humble servant King who pours out lavish mercy upon those who seek him but judgement upon those who think they're good enough — like the proud Pharisees. PAUSE

Louise — it's a great comfort to know that Bill is with God the Father because the Father is merciful and kind to those who seek him. His judgement is for those who think they're good enough. But his forgiveness and mercy is lavished on those who seek him. PAUSE

But we might go away from this service wondering if Jesus Christ is simply and only about heaven. That he can get us to heaven but has no relevance here and now.

It was with great interest that I watched a video, on Monday, which was prepared for Bill's retirement. I noted how the video emphasised (in places) that work is not just about building empires and making money — it's about service. It's about doing what you can to help others. We take it for granted, but that idea actually comes from Jesus, the Master, bending down to do the servant's job - washing his disciples' feet.

That's just one example. But Jesus Christ not only provides the way to heaven, he shows us how to live here and now.

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." PAUSE

Jesus Christ came from God the Father in heaven:

To show us who God the Father is — we can see that in Jesus' words and actions.

To provide the way to where God the Father is — Jesus is the way to heaven.

And to show us how to live God the Father's way here and now — Jesus shows us how to live the right way here and now.

The death of this Christian man, Bill Smith, does lead us to these words of Jesus Christ. Will heaven be your destination when you pass on from this earthly life? Jesus Christ shows us what heaven is like. Heaven is where God the Father is. And Jesus shows us who the Father is by his words and actions. And Jesus, who died for our sins, provides the way to heaven. It's a way that lavishes God's forgiveness on those who seek it. But Jesus is about more than heaven: he shows us how we ought to live this life.

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